

In the United States Court of Federal Claims

OFFICE OF SPECIAL MASTERS

No. 15-940V

Filed: February 13, 2017

UNPUBLISHED

LEWIS STEVEN BECKHAM, *

*

Petitioner, *

*

v. *

SECRETARY OF HEALTH *

Attorneys' Fees and Costs;

AND HUMAN SERVICES, *

Special Processing Unit ("SPU")

*

Respondent. *

*

Alison H. Haskins, Maglio Christopher & Toale, PA, Sarasota, FL, for petitioner.

Ann Donohue Martin, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC, for respondent.

DECISION ON ATTORNEYS' FEES AND COSTS¹

Dorsey, Chief Special Master:

On August 27, 2015, petitioner filed a petition for compensation under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, 42 U.S.C. §300aa-10, *et seq.*,² (the "Vaccine Act"). Petitioner alleged that he suffered Guillain-Barre Syndrome following receipt of his September 22, 2014 influenza vaccination. On September 26, 2016, the undersigned issued a decision awarding compensation to petitioner based on the parties' stipulation. (ECF No. 39).

On January 5, 2017, petitioner filed a motion for attorneys' fees and costs. (ECF No. 45.) Petitioner requests attorneys' fees in the amount of \$34,663.60 and attorneys' costs in the amount of \$2,096.44 for a total amount of \$36,760.04. *Id.* at 2. In

¹ Because this unpublished decision contains a reasoned explanation for the action in this case, the undersigned intends to post it on the United States Court of Federal Claims' website, in accordance with the E-Government Act of 2002. 44 U.S.C. § 3501 note (2012) (Federal Management and Promotion of Electronic Government Services). In accordance with Vaccine Rule 18(b), petitioner has 14 days to identify and move to redact medical or other information, the disclosure of which would constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy. If, upon review, the undersigned agrees that the identified material fits within this definition, the undersigned will redact such material from public access.

² National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986, Pub. L. No. 99-660, 100 Stat. 3755. Hereinafter, for ease of citation, all "§" references to the Vaccine Act will be to the pertinent subparagraph of 42 U.S.C. § 300aa (2012).

compliance with General Order #9, petitioner has filed a signed statement indicating petitioner incurred no out-of-pocket expenses.

On January 17, 2017, respondent filed a response to petitioner's motion. (ECF No. 46). Respondent argues that “[n]either the Vaccine Act nor Vaccine Rule 13 contemplates any role for respondent in the resolution of a request by a petitioner for an award of attorneys' fees and costs.” *Id.* at 1. Respondent adds, however, that she “is satisfied the statutory requirements for an award of attorneys' fees and costs are met in this case.” *Id.* at 2. Petitioner “respectfully recommends that the Chief Special Master exercise her discretion and determine a reasonable award for attorneys' fees and costs.” *Id.* at 3.

On January 18, 2017, petitioner filed a reply. (ECF No. 47). Petitioner argues that respondent's reliance on the special master's discretion is prejudicial and further addresses the basis for the fees and costs requested in this case.

The undersigned has reviewed the billing records submitted with petitioner's request. In the undersigned's experience, the request appears reasonable, and the undersigned finds no cause to reduce the requested hours or rates.

The Vaccine Act permits an award of reasonable attorneys' fees and costs. § 15(e). Based on the reasonableness of petitioner's request, the undersigned **GRANTS** petitioner's motion for attorneys' fees and costs.

Accordingly, the undersigned awards the total of \$36,760.04³ as a lump sum in the form of a check jointly payable to petitioner and petitioner's counsel, Alison H. Haskins, Esq.⁴

The clerk of the court shall enter judgment in accordance herewith.⁵

IT IS SO ORDERED.

s/Nora Beth Dorsey
Nora Beth Dorsey
Chief Special Master

³ This amount is intended to cover all legal expenses incurred in this matter. This award encompasses all charges by the attorney against a client, “advanced costs” as well as fees for legal services rendered. Furthermore, § 15(e)(3) prevents an attorney from charging or collecting fees (including costs) that would be in addition to the amount awarded herein. See generally *Beck v. Sec'y of Health & Human Servs.*, 924 F.2d 1029 (Fed. Cir.1991).

⁴ Petitioner requests that the check be forwarded to Maglio Christopher & Toale, PA, at 1605 Main Street, Suite 710, Sarasota, Florida 34236.

⁵ Pursuant to Vaccine Rule 11(a), entry of judgment can be expedited by the parties' joint filing of notice renouncing the right to seek review.